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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000480

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/SE AND NEA/I

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ENRG](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ: POST-GUL VISIT STATE OF PLAY

REF: ANKARA 460

Classified By: Ambassador James Jeffrey for reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: GOT officials were pleased with President Gul's March 23-24 visit to Baghdad, but KRG President Massoud Barzani's decision to stay away from Baghdad and pass on the opportunity to meet with Gul there tempered Turks' enthusiasm somewhat, according to Special Envoy for Iraq Murat Ozcelik. The Turks remain uncertain regarding Barzani's reasoning and whether it was truly a health-related visit to Vienna that necessitated travel, a preference to avoid having to engage with Maliki in Baghdad, or a wish to engage for the first time with the GOT at a senior official level somewhere other than in Baghdad. Regardless, it was an opportunity missed and President Gul had taken it personally. When during their meeting in Baghdad Nechirvan Barzani raised with Gul the possibility of Massoud and Gul meeting elsewhere in the near future, like Ankara, Gul had demurred, saying it was not on his immediate agenda. Ozcelik asked for USG support in getting the KRG to take concrete steps against the PKK as soon as possible, pressing the Iraqis to accept a proposed MOU on mil-mil cooperation with Turkey, and convincing the Iraqis to begin pursuing with greater urgency and seriousness efforts to bring Iraqi gas north through Turkey to European and world markets. Less directly, Ozcelik also requested the US urge that Barzani ensure the Kurdish conference he and Talabani are organizing for the end of April or early May contains no unpleasant surprises for the Turks. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) Concerning the press frenzy over whether Gul had uttered the word &Kurdistan when referring to the KRG or not, Ozcelik said of course Gul had, which is why reporters accompanying him on the trip down to Baghdad had reported it. It was not clear to Ozcelik what had prompted Gul's backtracking once he returned to Ankara, but accepted Ambassador's premise that political expediency had intervened as Turks prepare to go to the polls March 29 for local elections as the likely reason.

¶3. (C) Ozcelik expressed continued GOT concern about Barzani and Talabani's proposed &Kurdish conference, which the Turks want to ensure does not backfire and end up serving as

a platform for PKK positions/demands that could serve to undermine the hard-won interagency support Ozcelik had won for Turkey's new forward-looking policy of engagement with Baghdad and Erbil of recent months. He intimated it would be useful if the US note to Barzani the importance that his and Talabani's &Kurdish conference8 scheduled for late April/early May does not contain any unpleasant surprises for the Turks.

14. (C) Ozcelik requested US assistance on three issues regarding Turkey's relations with Iraq which might help push the GOI and KRG in a more constructive direction. On the PKK, Ozcelik said Barzani and Talabani are making the right noises about doing what is necessary to limit PKK's options and eventually push them out of their bases in northern Iraq, but Turkey will expect real action on the part of the KRG authorities and continued USG pressure on concrete steps (blocking logistical support, interdicting known PKK supporters upon arrival at Iraqi ports of entry, etc.) would be helpful. On mil-mil relations, TGS DCHOD Gen. Igsiz provided the text of an MOU on bilateral mil-mil cooperation, replacing a proposed bilateral agreement for which the Iraqis had indicated it would be too difficult to gain Council of Representatives concurrence, that the Turks hoped the Iraqis would find more acceptable. The MOU will provide the Turks the legal framework they require to provide training and other forms of cooperation, which they would like to do as soon as possible. The Iraqis have not yet responded and Ozcelik indicated US support for Iraqi concurrence might be helpful.

15. (C) Finally, Ozcelik noted the Turks have reached a high

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level of frustration with GOI Oil Minister Shahrستاني and would like US assistance in pressing the Iraqis to begin working with a greater sense of urgency and focus on coming to agreement to move Iraqi gas north through Turkey to European and world markets. Ambassador agreed it was in the interests of Turkey, Iraq, and the United States to make this happen.

16. (C) The Turks are considering a meeting of the bilateral Senior Level Strategic Cooperation Council, co-chaired by Foreign Ministers Babacan and Zebari, perhaps sometime in April in Istanbul. They would hope to make further progress on these issues at that time, as well as at the proposed Ministerial-level meeting of the trilateral US-Turkey-Iraq process for countering the PKK, which may also take place in April.

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Jeffrey